WORKFORCE
FOCUS

Women

Over the last three decades, women have entered the labor force in increasing numbers.[1] In 1975, 47 percent of working-age women in Washington State were in the labor market compared to 77.1 percent of men. By 2003, this number had increased to 60.4 percent, while the percentage for men had decreased to 73.7.[2] There are a number of reasons for this increase. Among them are higher education attainment by women, decisions to delay marriage and childbearing, changing gender roles, and household economic pressures. Because our population is aging, however, the participation rates for both women and men are expected to decline by 2020 to 59.5 percent for women and 71.2 percent for men.[3]

Report Highlights

- Women are less likely than men to be in our labor force—that is, working or looking for work. However, women and men in the labor force are equally likely to be working.
- The more education women and men have, the more likely they are to be in the labor force and working.
- Men and women in urban areas are more likely than those in rural areas to be in the labor force, but men in urban areas are more likely to be working than those in rural areas.
- Younger men and women are more likely than their older counterparts to be in the labor force, but less likely to be working.
- Women are more likely to work part time than men.
- In general, women earn less than men. However, the size of that difference varies by industry, occupation, education level, and age.
- With the exception of apprenticeship and dislocated worker programs where much smaller percentages of women participate, women were just as likely as men to participate in workforce development programs.
- Upon completion, women who participate in Workforce Investment Act (WIA) adult and WIA youth programs are more likely than men to be working. On the other hand, women who participate in adult basic skills and apprenticeship programs are less likely than men to be working.
- Like women in the general population, women who participate in workforce development programs tend to earn less than the men who participate in the same programs.

WASHINGTON STATE
WORKFORCE TRAINING AND
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Women in Washington[4]

Working-age women, i.e. those 20-64 years old, represent 60 percent of our state's population of women.

Working-age women have more education than men. Just over 69 percent have some postsecondary education; 35 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher; 14 percent have an associate's degree or vocational certificate; 20 percent have some college, but no degree; and 31 percent have a high school diploma or less. Men, by comparison, have slightly less education: nearly 66 percent have some postsecondary education; 35 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher; 14 percent have an associate's degree or vocational certificate; 17 percent have some college, but no degree; and 34 percent have a high school diploma or less.

Working-age women are more likely than men to be attending school and working while they do so. Slightly over 14 percent of working-age women are in school, either full time (9 percent) or part time (5 percent). This compares with 9 percent of working-age men in school: 6 percent full time and 3 percent part time. Of those in school, 69 percent of women and only 61 percent of men are also working.

Women are less likely than men to either be looking for work or working: 72 percent of women compared with 88 percent of men. However, of those in the labor force, 93 percent of both women and men are working.

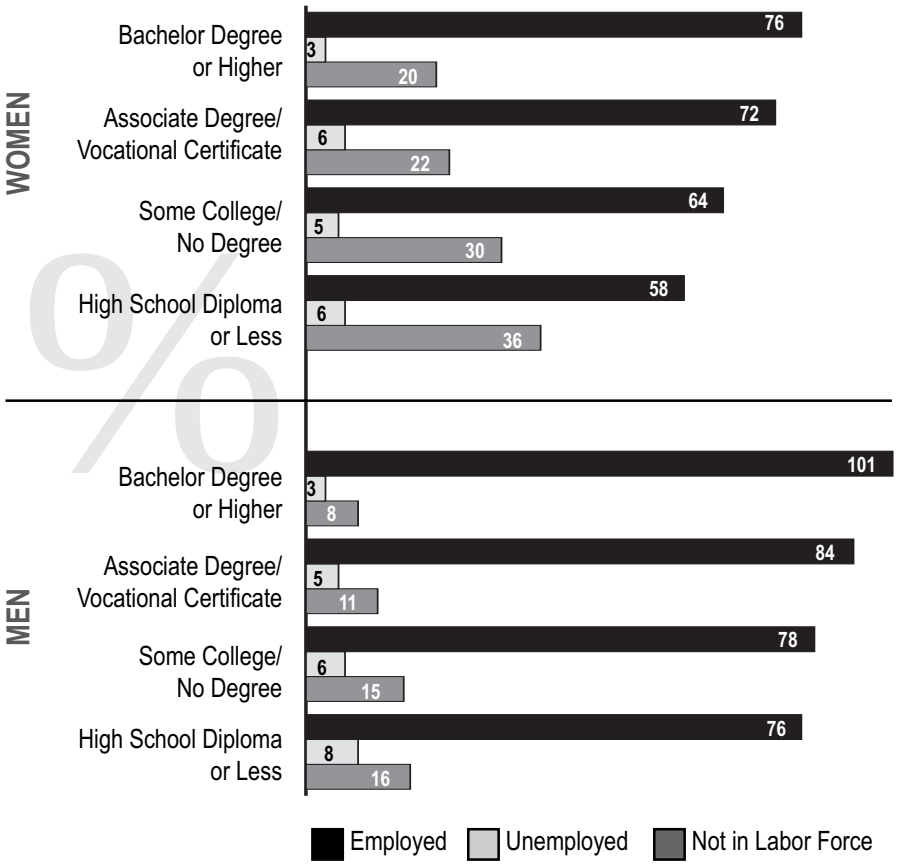
The more education men and women have, the more likely they are to be in the labor force and employed. See Figure 1.

Women in urban areas of the state are more likely than those in rural areas to be in the labor force: 74 percent compared to 68 percent.[5] A similar trend applies to men: 89 percent urban and 85 percent rural. However, in both urban and rural areas, 93 percent of women in the labor force are working compared with 94 percent of men in urban areas and 92 percent of men in rural areas.

Younger women are more likely than older women to be in the labor force: 75 percent of those 20-34, 74 percent of those 35-49, and 66 percent of those 50-64. However, older women are more likely to be working: 95 percent of those 50-64, 94 percent of those 35-49, 92 percent of those 20-34. The trends are similar for men.

FIGURE 1

Labor Force Status by Level of Education: Ages 20-64, Not Enrolled in School



If all working hours are combined, 71 percent of women and 94 percent of men work full time (35 hours or more per week).

About 10 percent of women hold more than one job compared to 8 percent of men. Of those with more than one job, a large majority hold two.

Most women work in the private sector. Fifty-three percent of women work for a private company, twenty-four percent work in the government sector, twelve percent work for a nonprofit organization, ten percent are self-employed, and two percent work for a family business. By comparison, 65 percent of men work for a private company, 19 percent work in the government sector, 4 percent work for a nonprofit organization, 11 percent are self-employed, and 2 percent work in a family business.

The services industries employ the most women in the private sector—64 percent. See Figure 2.

Men and women tend to cluster in different occupations: 40 percent of women work in business and professional occupations, whereas the bulk of working-age men (35 percent) work in construction, maintenance, production, and transportation occupations. See Figure 2.

In general, women earn less than men. The median hourly wage for women in their primary job is $16.48; for men, it is $20.60. On an hourly basis, women earn about 80 percent of what men earn. There are several reasons for this difference. The more evident ones are the occupations and industries in which women tend to work compared to men. In addition, in most families, women take on a larger share of child rearing and other home responsibilities often resulting in more frequent and longer spells of time away from the workforce than men.

FIGURE 2

Employment in Non-Government Sector: Ages 20-64, Not Enrolled in School

By Industry

	WOMEN	MEN
Services	64	31
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	11	7
Wholesale & Retail Trade	9	10
Transportation, Communication, Utilities	7	18
Manufacturing	5	15
Construction & Mining	2	15
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	1	4

By Occupation

	WOMEN	MEN
Business & Professional	40	30
Sales & Admin. Support	31	15
Service	17	9
Construction, Maintenance, Production, Transportation	6	35
Management	5	7
Farming, Fishing, Forestry	1	2
Military-Specific	0	1

Although women tend to earn less than men, the wage differences vary depending on industries and occupations. See Figure 3.[6]

Women with higher levels of education tend to have higher hourly wages. However, regardless of education level, women earn less than men. Women with a bachelor's degree or higher earn about what men with some college, but no degree, do. See Figure 4.

FIGURE 3

Hourly Wages of Employment

(median based on main job)

By Industry

	WOMEN	MEN
Transportation, Communication, Utilities	21.15	24.04
Manufacturing	19.23	20.51
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	17.79	25.41
Services	15.38	18.60
Construction & Mining	14.42	20.35
Wholesale & Retail Trade	13.46	18.99

By Occupation

	WOMEN	MEN
Management	27.88	33.22
Business & Professional	21.34	26.28
Construction, Maintenance, Production, Transportation	15.00	18.75
Sales & Admin. Support	14.42	18.46
Farming, Fishing, Forestry	12.50	13.87
Service	11.25	15.00

FIGURE 4

Hourly Wages by Level of Education

(median based on main job)

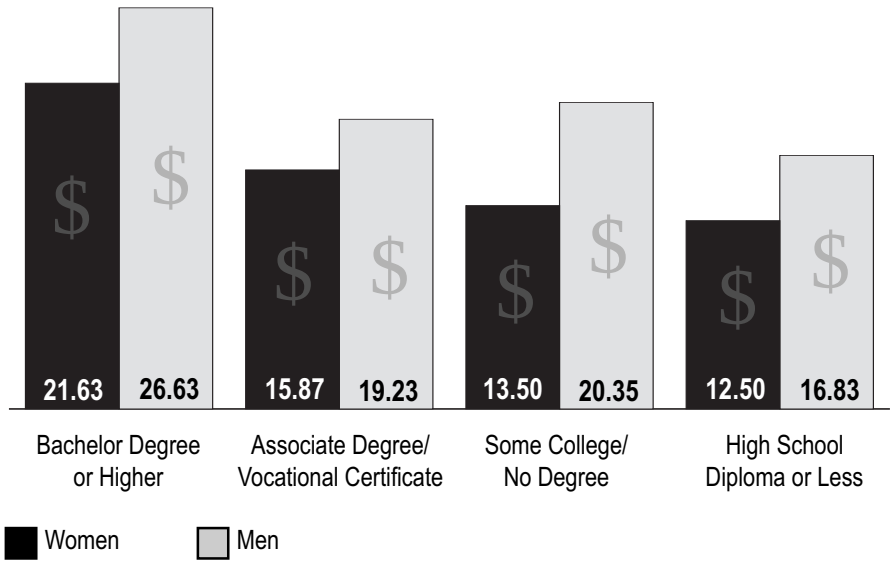
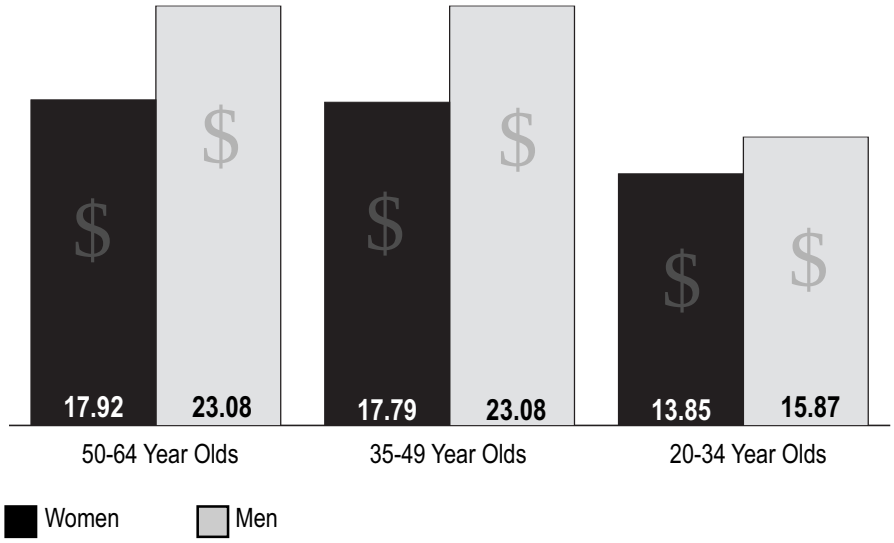


FIGURE 5

Hourly Wages by Age Group

(median based on main job)



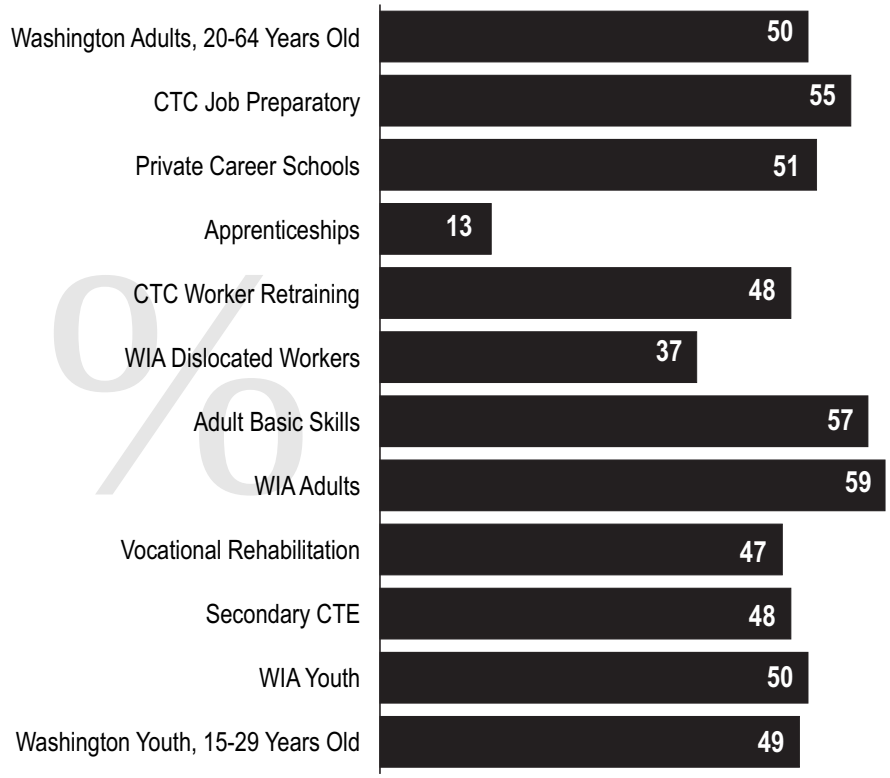
Older women aged 50-64 earn an hourly wage that is similar to those aged 35-49, but more than those aged 20-34. However, regardless of age, women earn less than men. See Figure 5.

Women in Washington's Workforce Development Programs[7]

Women are just as likely, or even more likely, than men to enroll in workforce development programs with the exception of apprenticeship and WIA dislocated worker programs. See Figure 6.[8]

FIGURE 6

Women in Workforce Development Programs



Where available, data show that women are more likely than men to complete community/ technical college (CTC) job preparatory and apprenticeship programs and less likely to complete CTC worker retraining programs.[9] See Figure 7.

A larger percentage of women than men who participate in WIA adult and youth programs and a smaller percentage of women than men who participate in adult basic skills and apprenticeship programs are working after leaving their programs.[10] See Figure 8.

FIGURE 7

Women and Men Completing Workforce Development Programs

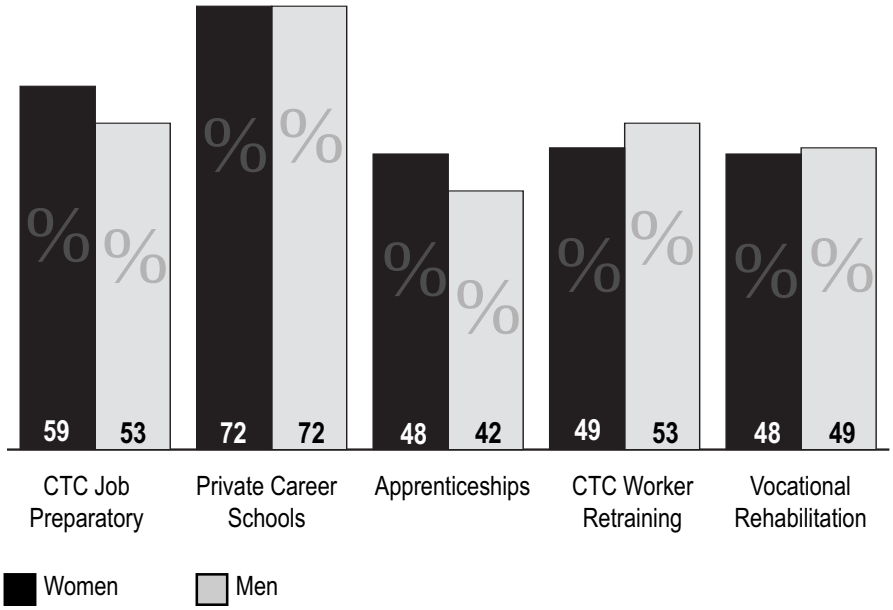


FIGURE 8

Employment Rates of Women and Men After Workforce Development Programs

(employed during third quarter after leaving the program)

	WOMEN	MEN
CTC Job Preparatory	72	70
Private Career Schools	65	66
Apprenticeships	67	73
CTC Worker Retraining	68	67
WIA Dislocated Workers	77	74
Adult Basic Skills	52	60
WIA Adults	68	63
Vocational Rehabilitation	44	47
Secondary CTE	60	59
WIA Youth	55	50

FIGURE 9

Earnings of Women and Men After Workforce Development Programs

(median based on third quarter after leaving the program)

Hourly

	WOMEN	MEN
CTC Job Preparatory	11.98	13.33
Private Career Schools	11.11	12.52
Apprenticeships	12.70	22.23
CTC Worker Retraining	11.86	13.77
WIA Dislocated Workers	12.04	15.01
Adult Basic Skills	8.72	10.00
WIA Adults	9.87	11.29
Vocational Rehabilitation	9.78	9.96
Secondary CTE	8.00	8.50
WIA Youth	7.86	8.04

Annually

	WOMEN	MEN
CTC Job Preparatory	19,651	24,003
Private Career Schools	17,402	22,164
Apprenticeships	19,569	33,356
CTC Worker Retraining	19,309	24,349
WIA Dislocated Workers	22,444	29,511
Adult Basic Skills	13,220	17,739
WIA Adults	15,937	18,989
Vocational Rehabilitation	12,345	12,674
Secondary CTE	9,526	11,115
WIA Youth	8,081	8,282

Like women in the general population, women who participate in workforce development programs tend to earn less than men. With the exception of WIA youth, secondary CTE, and vocational rehabilitation programs, women's hourly wage and annual earnings are substantially less than men. Large differences in wages are often the result of industry and occupation choices. For example, the large difference in wages for those who participate in apprenticeship programs is due to the relatively large percentage of women in such programs as child care. See Figure 9.

End Notes

[1]In this paper, the term "labor force" refers to those who are currently working (either full time or part time) or who are actively looking for work. It is further defined as civilian noninstitutional and therefore excludes those who live in nursing homes, prison, or military barracks.

[2]"2004 Long-Term Economic and Labor Force Forecast for Washington," Washington State Office of Financial Management and Washington State Employment Security Department, June 2004.

[3]Ibid.

[4]The information on working-age women and men in Washington is based on data from the 2004 State Population Survey (SPS). Unless otherwise indicated, all of the employment and education information references a point in time—spring 2004. Further, the employment and earnings data are based on those who are ages 20-64 and who indicated they were not in school at the time of the survey.

[5]Urban and rural areas are defined using the SPS regions. The urban areas include the following regions: King County, Other Puget Metro, Clark County, and Spokane County. The rural areas include the following regions: North Sound, West Balance, Yakima-Tri Cities, and East Balance.

[6]The sample sizes for women in agriculture, forestry, and fishing industries and in military-specific occupations are too small on which to base reliable wage estimates.

[7]Based on participants exiting programs between July 1, 2001 and June 30, 2002. For data sources, methodology, and program descriptions, see *Workforce Training Results 2004* from the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board. We caution against making comparisons among the programs or with the state's population-at-large: the populations served, the types of services provided, and lengths of training vary substantially from program to program.

[8]Data on the state's population ages 15-19 and 20-64 are from Washington's Office of Financial Management's 2004 population estimates.

[9]Completion rate data are not available for programs that do not appear in the Figure 7.

[10]Employment rates are based only on employment recorded in Employment Security Department records in Washington and other Northwest states, thereby understating the actual rate of employment by about 10 percentage points. The rates are for all program participants who exited their programs, not just those who completed the program. Despite the relatively large difference between women and men leaving WIA dislocated worker programs, the difference is not statistically significant at the .05 level.

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Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

Our Vision

Washington's Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board is an active and effective partnership of labor, business, and government leaders guiding the best workforce development system in the world.

Our Mission

We shape strategies to create and sustain a high-skill, high-wage economy.

To fulfill this Mission, the Board will:

- Advise the Governor, Legislature, and other policymakers on workforce development policy and innovative practice.
- Promote a seamless workforce development system that anticipates and meets the lifelong learning and employment needs of our current and future workforce.
- Advocate for the training and education needed for success in the 75–80 percent of jobs that do not require a baccalaureate degree.
- Ensure quality and accountability by evaluating results, and supporting high standards and continuous improvement.